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roast meats, chickens, game, hard eggs, a bottle of raki, &c. His mountain rambles had not been without fruit, every one being eager to contribute to his benefit; so he lived like a satrap, the holy man! He confessed to us that, stranger as he was to all the affairs of this world, he had no other care than to drink, to eat, to sleep. The poor man! His chin fell in a triple fold upon his broad chest, and surely it would have been impossible for me to embrace the majestic rotundity of his abdomen."

ART. III. — *Poems*. By ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING. In Three Volumes. New York: James Miller. 1861. 32mo.

READING "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," or "Aurora Leigh," before the grass is green on Elizabeth Browning's grave, is not favorable to a critical estimate of the poet or her works. The patient years of suffering, the persistent will, the steadiness, strength, and purity, the labors and attainments of this extraordinary woman, come before us in stately procession; and were it not for the touching record of her love, and of her death in the arms of love, we could almost wish that her dream had been realized, and that she might have been something other, and — if she would have it so — something more than a woman. But inasmuch as she was a great woman, she was greatly a woman; and if she exceeded her sex in strength and aspiration, it was only to foreshow what a woman may gain in her proper sphere, — not in another, — and to assure us that no soul of man, however high, needs lack a companion to strengthen and complete, as well as to beautify, his life.

Before entering upon the discrimination which the life and labors of Elizabeth Barrett Browning suggest, it is meet to pay a tribute to what she did, and to the spirit in which she wrought. Of all women of her day, she was most a laborer in the fields which are trodden by the feet of men. A form frail as a lily's was endowed with the will of a giant. This will dragged her slight frame through the furrows of toil, side by side with her brother-men. Like them, she dug in the mines of classic lore, with such results as are possible only to

heroic spirits of either sex. To will and persistency she added the perceptive delicacy and retentive power which characterize her sex. In women generally, these faculties, though wonderfully subtle and helpful within a certain sphere, are limited by the softer fibre which pervades the female mind as well as body. The will corresponds; it is swift, but it is also fitful. Eminently subjective, — as all a woman's qualities are, — it is self-distrustful, apt to be dissuaded and characterized by the pliancy of impulse as distinguished from the poise of reason. But Mrs. Browning's will was so strong, and she was so isolated by circumstances from the influences that usually mould a woman, that she became, in a remarkable degree, self-sustained; — not, as we shall see, becoming in any respect more or less than a woman, but capable of labors which few women could perform, yet in performing which she never encroached upon the manly sphere, whatever her desire to prove that sphere to be common ground, and no field of trespass. She wrought always in a woman's spirit and in a woman's way. How affecting it is to see her striving against physical infirmity! Bowed upon her bed, while life flickered more feebly than the lamp beside her, she wrestled with the sinewy Greeks, and strove in spirit on Olympus. She *would not* die, and for her mission, which was before her, though she discerned it not, she was prepared, and lived to fulfil it.

Of her merely literary style we care to say but little, and still less of its faults. She was in haste to be understood, and, so that she gained clear expression, was careless of the flowerbeds and the borders. Her style is consequently strong and clear, but uneven, and often abrupt. A sentence or paragraph occasionally limps a little after the hastening thought. A degree of stiffness is also sometimes given by a pet word, — coined for her own use, or obsolete, or picked up in an old book, — that suits the metre, or the humor of the writer. A carelessness of rhyme is also not infrequently to be regretted, even in a fine passage. But let all praise be awarded to the general *purity* of her vocabulary. Few, if any, writers of the age use a diction so strongly Anglo-Saxon. Indeed, in a careful comparison of eminent English and American writers, from Chaucer to the present time, — taking an example from each, —

Mrs. Browning's "Cry of the Children" was found to contain ninety-two per cent of Anglo-Saxon words, — a proportion greater than in Spenser, Shakespeare, or Milton, and exceeded only by Chaucer and by the translation of St. John's Gospel.

There are certain faults in Mrs. Browning's style, arising from the false position in which she tried to stand, and to which, with a strange concealment of them from herself, and by stress of habit, she clung to the end. These faults — to which we shall have further need to refer — were, under the circumstances, peculiarly feminine, and consisted in a strutting gait, a pertness of expression, a consciousness of what she was doing, and a somewhat ostentatious estimate of her powers. In the same category, a little pedantry is discernible, hardly to have been avoided where there was so much Greek. These are the principal exceptions to a style of composition otherwise eminently sturdy and expressive, free from redundancy, suggestive, brilliant, and sometimes almost sublime. What she saw in nature she observed, loved, remembered, and reproduced. But her sphere was the inner mind, rather than the external world; and probably the enforced seclusion of her life strengthened this tendency. Thus, by reason of her surroundings, as well as of her womanly nature, feeling, rather than observation, distinguishes her poetry, and a feeling all the purer and more intense because it owes so little to garnish.

Mrs. Browning's strong Saxon style was the fitting garment of her healthful and unhackneyed thoughts. It is the principal merit of her poetry that it rises so far above the conventionalism of female writers, from Hannah More down to the Honorable Mrs. Norton. All things are pure to her, and with unhesitating frankness she gives the utterances of nature. She was an artist, and her creations lie naked in the pure marble from which she chiselled them. Their freshness even startles us. Yet this beautiful clarity, — abrupt, sometimes, as a laugh, shriek, or sudden gush of waters, — though deeper than form or style, is itself the product of that love of truth, for the truth's sake, which is indispensable to the highest development of art. Art, like the sacred Scriptures, is "of no *private* interpretation," but can be expounded only upon the

broadest principles of truth,—truth not only objective, (which is easier to see,) but subjective; not only external, but essential; not only that which feeds complacency, but that which tends to shame, disappointment, and even self-exposure. We have no recollection of man or woman who deals so honestly with self, or who follows a truth so regardlessly of personal consequences, as Mrs. Browning. As her works are, by the necessity of her sex, mostly subjective, this honesty is especially admirable. It has resulted in an artistic triumph, though the fair sculptor “builded better than she knew.” She has left a perfect statue of herself, a service to womanhood and to the world which cannot easily be over-estimated. Whatever inconsistencies belong to woman, and whatever are incidental to the conflicting position in which Mrs. Browning placed herself,—between the impulses of her sex and the avocations of the other,—are transparently exposed in her own creations. It may be that she was conscious of some of these inconsistencies. But if she was, she would not evade the dilemma; for her loyalty to truth was never exceeded. She repeatedly scorns immunity because of weakness, incapacity, or sex; and in this differs from all other women of her class. It is difficult to discover in her writings a single assertion of feminine privilege. She accepts the consequences of competition.

“This vile woman’s way
Of trailing garments shall not trip *me* up.
I’ll have no traffic with the personal thought
In art’s pure temple.”

“Let no one till his death
Be called *unhappy*. Measure not the work
Until the day’s out, and the labor done;
Then bring your gauges. If the day’s work’s scant,
Why, call it scant; affect no compromise;
And in that we have nobly striven at least,
Deal with us nobly, women though we be,
And honor us with truth, if not with praise.”

“If I fail, why, burn me up my straw
Like other false works, — I’ll not ask for grace,
Your scorn is better.”

This heroism appears frequently in her writings; and were
29*

it not that she unconsciously reveals the feminine source and subsoil of the martial flower,

“whose hue, angry and brave,
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,”

we might believe that here was a man in woman's form. But, indeed, love — and proper woman's love, though of the noblest kind — was the source of all ; as she sang, —

“I love love ! truth's no cleaner thing than love.
I comprehend a love so fiery hot
It burns its natural veil of august shame,
And stands sublimely in the nude, as chaste
As Medicean Venus. But I know
A love that burns through veils will burn up masks,
And shrivel up treachery. What, love and lie !
Nay, go to the opera ! your love's curable.”

Thus Nature spoke, inspiring the prophethess. Love is the soul of the gentler sex, even as truth is of the stronger.

A discriminative American critic characterizes the author of “Aurora Leigh” in the following terms : —

“Mrs. Browning is an honor to her sex, and no member thereof can fail to derive advantage from the spirit of her muse. It speaks words of ‘heroic cheer,’ and suggests thoughtful courage, sublime resignation, and exalted hope. At the same time, we cannot but feel her incompleteness. We incline to have faith in less systematic phases of woman's character. There is a native tenderness and grace, a child-like play of emotion, a simple utterance, that brings more genial refreshment. We do not depreciate Mrs. Browning's lofty spirit and brave scholarship. They are alike honorable and efficient ; but sometimes they overlay nature, and formalize emotion, making the pathway to the heart rather too long and coldly elegant for quick and entire sympathy. Yet this very blending of sense and sensibility, learning and love, reason and emotion, will do much, and has already done much (as we can perceive by recent criticisms) to vindicate true sentiment, and a genuine devotion to the beautiful. . . . Could we not trace the woman beneath attainment and reflection, our admiration might be excited, but our sympathies would not awaken.”

The moral difference between the sexes is not an accidental or unessential matter, which can be altered by education, or corrected by discipline. It is necessary, radical, and most unchangeable. It consists in opposite and complementary qual-

ities. If it were otherwise, the sexes could never meet, much less unite. The great apostle of the (so-called) New Church, who mingles mysticism and philosophy so profoundly in his teachings, speaks of these essentially distinct and immiscible characteristics as follows : —

“ Many believe that women can perform the duties of men, if they are initiated therein at an early age, as boys are. They may, indeed, be initiated into the practice of such duties, *but not into the judgment on which the propriety of duties interiorly depends* ; wherefore such women as have been initiated into the duties of men are bound, in matters of judgment, to consult men ; and then, *if they are left to their own disposal, they select from the counsels of men that which suits their own inclination*. Some also suppose that women are equally capable with men of elevating their intellectual vision, and into the same sphere of light, and of viewing things with the same depth ; and they have been led into this opinion by the writings of certain learned authoresses ; but these writings, when examined in the spiritual world in the presence of the authoresses, *were found to be the production, not of judgment and wisdom, but of ingenuity and wit* ; and what proceeds from these, on account of the elegance and neatness of the style in which it is written, has the appearance of sublimity and erudition, yet only in the eyes of those who dignify all ingenuity by the name of wisdom. In like manner, men cannot enter into the duties proper to women, and perform them aright, because they are not in the affections of women, which are altogether distinct from the affections of men. . . . The two affections of the woman and the man cannot be united except (as subsisting) between two, and in no case (as subsisting) in one.”

The finely-grounded and expressive word by which early English writers defined the highest mental attribute — *discourse*, or *discourse of reason* — contains in itself the elementary distinction between the masculine and feminine mind. It was used by that master of English, John Milton, to express this difference. It is the fashion to devise contradictions of the instituted axioms of great minds, in order to show how far superior we in these days are to them. This propensity has reduced inconsiderate and inconsiderable scribes to great straits, where, happily for the world, they often stick fast, and wriggle out their unimportant life unobserved. Persons of this class are very apt to refuse honor to an authority like Milton. But not even the temptation of proving our-

selves wiser than he was should hinder the acknowledgment, that he characterized the essentials of the sexes with unerring and absolute fidelity. That universally known but inimitable passage beginning,

“Two, of far nobler shape, erect and tall,”

contains more than all our modern sentimental philosophers have evolved in their “reams of folly.”

It is not our purpose to enter now upon this interesting and important subject further than to state the distinction in nature between the masculine and feminine mind which is illustrated by every effort, of either sex, that has character enough to command respect. The one is discursive, the other intuitive; the one is rational, the other impulsive; the one deals with wisdom, the other with love; the one is comprehensive, the other conservative. There are men who are like women, and women who are like men; but their qualities are not interchangeable, and there is ever a limit within the proper characteristics of each where the resemblance stops. It might be expected that the mental efforts of the sexes would be characterized respectively by an objective and subjective tendency. This we accordingly find to be universally true. Mrs. Browning is no exception; but she vindicates her sex, in all her writings, by an intense and subtle subjectivity.

Mrs. Browning's great success is in her failure. She undoubtedly set before herself the task, not so much to elevate woman in the sphere which she is supposed to occupy, as to prove that she has no exclusive sphere, but may make any attainment which is possible to man. Possessed by the fallacy that the intellect is superior to the heart, and that woman must be inferior to man, if incapable of his great scope of reason, she attempted to show that the remedy was within reach of her sex. Who cannot lament the beautiful insanity which glowed in the sonnet to George Sand, entitled, “A Recognition”?

“True genius, but true woman! dost deny
Thy woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds and armlets worn
By weaker women in captivity?
Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry

Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn : —
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn,
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
Disproving thy man's name ; and while before
The world thou burnest in a poet's fire,
We see thy woman heart beat evermore
Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher,
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore,
Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire."

Did she dream that God, who made such a beautiful creation, would deny his wisdom and work to "unsex" it? Is it weakness to acknowledge a "woman's nature," — or is it "manly scorn" in a woman to deny it? But the cure came to Elizabeth Barrett, though perhaps she never acknowledged it for all that it was. Her intellectual attempt was truly a failure, as far as it sought competition with men. But it was a glorious success, as a higher illustration than was ever otherwise afforded of what a woman is, and of what she may do in her own exalted and luminous sphere.

There is no philosophy in "Aurora Leigh." It is rather a playing with philosophy, — an acute and imitative handling of the tools of the masculine workman. We have seen a tender-handed woman enter her husband's shop, and mimic his handicraft with femininely stern countenance, and little sinews resolutely strung, until, weary of the uncongenial work, she threw down the implements, and stood in the grace of her sex, — lovelier for the pantomime. So do the long, dashing, and rather pert discoursings of Aurora Leigh end in the true woman's argument, — "because." If we are a little startled at first by the careless way in which she lays about her with the edged tools of reasoning, we speedily have the satisfaction of seeing that they are harmless in her hands, and that we have our woman yet. Nothing can be more womanly than these argumentative passages. Impulsive, inconsistent, illogical ; abounding with saucy "sirs," and with smart sayings ; often swaggering, and not infrequently scolding outright ; — they are like a brisk game of foils, and would be amusing if the fair fencer were not so mortally in earnest, so aggressive, and so determined to receive no quarter. Nothing is so far from our purpose as to use the terms by which

we have characterized these passages offensively. Some of the qualities thus enumerated are, as we have stated, evoked by the poet's false position. She is in the wrong, primarily, — not necessarily wrong in the argument, but in arguing at all, — and she resorts with the utmost unconsciousness to the weaker weapons of the sex. Besides, the most genuine subjectivity pervades every attempt. The woman could not reason except from within. Hence the greater and external arcana were unrevealed to her, and must remain so. A consequence, amounting to a deformity, was an assuming egotism, at once as far from feminine as from manly perfection. It would take too much space to justify this criticism by quotations; but reference may be made to the second and eighth books of "*Aurora Leigh*," as illustrating almost all these faults and peculiarities. It is most instructive to see, after all, how inevitably this extraordinary poem ends in a love story, and one so beautiful, and, with the exception of a few muscularities, so feminine. The finest passage in the poem is its culmination of love. The writer's soul is in it.

"I flung closer to his breast,
As sword that after battle flings to sheathe;
And in that hurtle of united souls,
The mystic motions which in common moods
Are shut beyond our sense broke in on us,
And, *as we sate, we felt the old earth spin,*
And all the starry turbulence of worlds
Swing round us in their audient circles, till,
If that same golden moon were overhead,
Or if beneath our feet, we did not know."

An extended review of Mrs. Browning's poems is not here contemplated. "She sang the song of Italy"; she wrote "*Aurora Leigh*." The latter is doubtless her greatest work, when its scope is considered. It does not contain as many fine passages as a collection of her minor poems, equal to it in bulk, would include. But it comprises numerous paragraphs of great power and beauty, and is remarkable as the only example of a sustained, complete, and symmetrical epic from the pen of a woman. Among the other longer poems, we will speak of only two: "*A Drama of Exile*" and "*Casa Guidi Windows*." Both are worthy of her reputation, but

the first is chiefly valuable for its unconscious transparency. It is a clock-work of feminine qualities set in crystal. Otherwise, if judged objectively, as we judge the "Divina Commedia," or "Paradise Lost," it is deformed by self-importance. The subject is the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden. Such a theme is eminently Salic, and in that spirit Mrs. Browning perhaps intended loyally to treat it. But she is not to be blamed if she was nauseated, long before, by the heartless and apish twaddle about Mother Eve, and the eternal chargeableness of human suffering to her curiosity. On the supposition that the narrative in Genesis is to be taken literally, Eve acted just like a woman, and what man in his senses could wish her to have acted otherwise? If the narrative is parabolic, the same remark is true. It appears that Adam, in his sublime sorrow, was content with his mate,—followed her in her sin, and led her forth from the abode of blessedness to toil with her, and for her,—

"thanking Thee,
That rather Thou hast cast me out with *her*,
Than left me lorn of her in paradise."

The quotation is from Mrs. Browning's poem, which contains several charming touches of nature and feeling, and by no means disguises or palliates the supposed fault of the first woman. Eve tells her husband of her deep debasement, first bidding him,

"Kiss on my lips,
To shut the door close on my rising soul,
Lest it pass outwards in astonishment
And leave thee lonely."

Then : —

"Let me lie so,
And weep so, as if in a dream or prayer,
Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard, tight thought
Which clipped my heart, and showed me evermore
Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the snake,
And as the pure ones loathe our sin. To-day,
All day, beloved, as we fled across
This desolating radiance cast by swords,
Not suns, my lips prayed soundless to myself,
Striking against each other : 'O Lord God !'
('T was so I prayed,) 'I ask Thee by my sin,

And by thy curse, and by thy blameless heavens,
 Make dreadful haste to hide me from thy face
 And from the face of my beloved here,
 For whom I am no helpmeet, quick away
 Into the new, dark mystery of death !
 I will lie still there, I will make no plaint ;
 I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a word,
 Nor struggle to come back beneath the sun,
 Where peradventure I might sin anew
 Against Thy mercy and his pleasure. Death,
 O death, whate'er it be, is good enough
 For such as I am. — While for Adam here,
*No voice shall say again, in heaven or earth,
 It is not good for him to be alone."*

Farther on, after much dispute with Lucifer, and after visions of terror and consolation, the excited twain stand discerning the constellations, and with a quaintly explanatory foot-note in the words, " Her maternal instinct is excited by Gemini," the author puts another exquisite utterance in the mouth of Eve. Adam points : —

" Dost thou see
 That phantasm of a woman ? "

Eve, who never needs suggestion in this poem, but is always, if anything, a little ahead, replies,

" I have seen —— "

and adds : —

" But look off to those small humanities,
 Which draw me tenderly across my fear, —
 Lesser and fainter than my womanhood,
 Or yet thy manhood, — with strange innocence
 Set in the misty lines of head and hand,
 They lean together ! "

Can anything be more charmingly feminine than this passage, — foot-note and all ? Eve, recovering from her astonishment of shame, talks at an amazing rate. Adam can scarcely slip in a word edgewise. She discourses on all matters, and fairly shelves her spouse for the time being. That deferential superiority which is so admirably displayed in the treatment of properly disciplined husbands had never a better exemplification. Not satisfied with the way in which Adam is dealing with the wailing spirits that beset them as they wandered from paradise,

Eve proposes to take them in hand. Adam somewhat curtly consents, and she preludes a three-page harangue to the spirits with

“ Thus, then — my hand in thine.”

We take this introduction to be inimitable: “ My dear — one moment, if you please,” — and the little hand shuts down like doom. Uxorious husbands will please bear witness. Of course she talks well, and accuses herself at such a rate, that Adam at length interposes, “ will not hear her speak so,” and manifests a disposition to “ pitch into ” the spirits on her account. But she, justly confident of superior skill in managing these subtle agencies, waves him back, and continues her speech. She succeeds, as so many of her sex have since done, — be it said reverently, — in raising the Devil, who again comes on the scene, and curses in a truly diabolical manner. Then there is much movement and colloquy of spirits, skilfully and dramatically handled, and at last Christ appears, and is immediately adopted and immensely patronized by Eve, who bids him, “ Speak on,” *adding* his name, in a manner far more familiar than respectful. She interjects, “ O pathetic Christ ! ” and “ O pale, pathetic Christ ! ” as by encouragement, while he proceeds ; declares that her nature overcomes her ; and accepts, in a speech of a page,

“ For me and for my daughters this high part,
Which lowly shall be counted.”

Most true to nature is this immediate sympathy of the female heart with Jesus Christ ; ever tending upward, clinging to that which is above it, and showing its affinity with the divine love that always heals, upbuilds, and recovers, but never destroys, — that will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. With this divine tendency, linking man’s coarser nature to heaven, earthly foibles are conjoined ; and Mrs. Browning, whose Eve was not more of a woman than herself, brings out the latter somewhat “ larger than life.” With much that is fine, and a whole that is artistic, the author, in her anxiety to maintain the correlative importance of her sex, makes her Eve out a needlessly garrulous, opinionated, and cunning woman, whose intellect thrashes through the

affections with sharp cuts, making everything red with regulation and discipline,—just the woman to drive a man desperate, and to neutralize love by executive vigor.

“Casa Guidi Windows” is the famous “Song of Italy,” and although strongly marked by the woman’s subjectivity of stand-point, it is a noble outlook upon priestly oppression, popular suffering, and human rights. It is in two parts,—the first having been written in 1848, and the second in 1851,—and it illustrates, in the author’s own words, “the discrepancy between aspiration and performance, between faith and disillusion, between hope and fact.” The following lines, which strike our eye in turning the leaves of this poem, may be quoted as a good specimen of Mrs. Browning’s power:—

“Yea, I will not choose
Betwixt thy throne, Pope Pius, and the spot
Marked red forever, spite of rains and dews,
Where two fell riddled by the Austrian’s shot,—
The brothers Bandiera, who accuse,
With one same mother-voice and face (that what
They speak may be invincible), the sins
Of earth’s tormentors before God, the just,
*Until the unconscious thunderbolt begins
To loosen in His grasp.”*

In this, and other passages, a quality is discernible that can be designated only by the term Shakespearian.

Mrs. Browning beautifully excuses her faith in “false Duke Leopold,” by the confession,—

“I saw the man among his little sons,
His lips were warm with kisses while he swore,—
And I, *because I am a woman*, I,
Who felt my own child’s coming life before
The prescience of my soul, and held faith high,—
I could not bear to think, whoever bore,
That lips so warmed could shape so cold a lie.”

It is difficult to preserve the tenor of criticism in the presence of such womanliness as this passage presents; and to say, that it unfits its subject for the arena of strife, and proves that *men* must judge men in the administrative duties of the external world.

Two quotations must conclude our hasty notice of this fine

poem. Together they give a good impression of the mingled strength and tenderness of the author's best style. The first is eminently timely, and its length needs no apology.

“ A cry is up in England, which doth ring
 The hollow world through, that, for ends of trade
 And virtue, and God's better worshipping,
 We henceforth should exalt the name of peace,
 And leave those rusty wars that eat the soul,
 Besides their clippings at our golden fleece.

 I love no peace which is not fellowship,
 And which includes not mercy. I would have,
 Rather, the raking of the guns across
 The world, and shrieks against heaven's architrave.
 Rather, the struggle in the slippery fosse
 Of dying men and horses, and the wave
 Blood-bubbling. . . . Enough said ! By Christ's own cross,
 And by this faint heart of my womanhood,
 Such things are better than a peace which sits
 Beside a hearth in self-commended mood,
 And takes no thought how wind and rain by fits
 Are howling out of doors against the good
 Of the poor wanderer. What ! your peace admits
 Of outside anguish while it keeps at home ?
 I loathe to take its name upon my tongue.
 'T is nowise peace. 'T is treason, stiff with doom, —
 'T is gagged despair, and inarticulate wrong,
 Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,
 Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting 'neath the thong,
 And Austria wearing a smooth olive-leaf
 On her brute forehead, while her hoofs outpress
 The life from these Italian souls, in brief.
 O Lord of Peace, who art Lord of Righteousness,
 Constrain the anguished world from sin and grief,
 Pierce them with conscience, purge them with redress,
 And give us peace which is no counterfeit.”

Our second quotation is the conclusion of the poem, in which the author calls up her little son, and bids him prophesy.

“ The sun strikes through the windows, up the floor :
 Stand out in it, my own young Florentine,
 Not two years old, and let me see thee more !
 It grows along thy amber curls, to shine
 Brighter than elsewhere. Now look straight before,
 And fix thy brave, blue English eyes on mine,

And from thy soul which fronts the future so,
 With unabashed and unabated gaze,
 Teach me to hope for what the angels know,
 When they smile clear as thou dost. Down God's ways,
 With just alighted feet between the snow
 And snowdrops, where a little lamb may graze,
 Thou hast no fear, my lamb, about the road,
 Albeit in our vainglory we assume
 That less than we have, thou hast learned of God.
 Stand out, my blue-eyed prophet! — thou, to whom
 The earliest world-day light that ever flowed
 Through Casa Guidi windows, chanced to come!
 Now shake the glittering nimbus of thy hair,
 And be God's witness, — that the elemental
 New springs of life are gushing everywhere
 To cleanse the water-courses, and prevent all
 Concrete obstructions which infest the air!
 That earth's alive, and gentle or ungentle
 Motions within her signify but growth!

 But *we* sit murmuring for the future, though
 Posterity is smiling on our knees,
 Convicting us of folly? Let us go, —
 We will trust God.

 Such cheer I gather from thy smiling, Sweet!
 The selfsame cherub-faces which emboss
 The Vail lean inward to the Mercy-seat."

There can be no hesitation in designating the rank of Mrs. Browning. She is the queen of poets. Others of her sex have been as earnest, but no other has come up to her stretch of power. Others have been as limpid, but they had not her depth of clearness. Others have been as tender, but because they had not her power and depth, they have suffused with their tenderness a narrower sphere. Others have been as heroic, for every true woman dares to die; but she bore sword, — not armor, — and took her woman-heart into the field. There was in her nature a certain necessity for the arena, and the competition of the lists. It distinguishes genius, in its feminine as well as masculine outgoings, to live as kings live, before the eyes of men; so that all greatness is common property, and the impulses that in private life are most sacred in royal life cannot be concealed, but are beholden of all. Elizabeth

Browning was the queen of song, and she had all royal impulses, traits, necessities, and circumstances. She was not, indeed, another Shakespeare, but she came nearest to being Shakespeare's counterpart. Nothing can be clearer, however, than that she was a woman, and only a woman. One of the noblest of the sex was not to be proved by development a monstrosity in God's creation. Her greatness made her singular, — "a bright, particular star," — and he must be no common man who could hope to wed it. But conjunctions do "grace the skies." Such a man came at length, and all the fallacies which singleness, superiority, and the long, disappointed look of the great and exacting heart had bred, disappeared like the mists when the sun rises. The story of love, as it lay concealed in the heart of a woman, to rise in overmastering strength at the fulness of time, was never told with a finer art than in "Aurora Leigh." The tale was written, not by Elizabeth Barrett, but by Browning's wife. Far inferior, however, is this imaginative tale, to the true story of the love of the poet's mate, in the Sonnets attributed, by so delicate a fiction, to the Portuguese. We can scarcely forbear extended quotations from them. They are, without competition, the finest love poems in our language, and afford lessons from which every disappointed, unsatisfied heart — every unbeliever in the peculiar greatness of womanhood, every one unmindful of its power to solace and support the soul of man — may gain peace, hope, and the strengthening of faith. Elizabeth Barrett Browning is greatest in these effusions. All her attempted philosophy and philanthropy are merged in her nature's flood. In finding her mate, she found the solution of the life-riddle that had perplexed her, and at which she had guessed so adventurously. Nothing else is so remarkable in these life-throbs of sonnets, as the sweetness of their humility. That is the peculiar quality of love. Where is the strong-minded woman, the would-be reasoner, the competitor for the bays of fame?

"What hast *thou* to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me, —
A poor, tired, wandering singer? . . . singing through
The dark, and leaning on a cypress-tree?"

"Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
 Wouldst thou miss any life in losing mine,
 And would the sun for thee more coldly shine,
 Because of grave-damps falling round my head?
 I marvelled, my beloved, when I read
 Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine, —
 But . . . *so* much to thee? Can I pour thy wine
 While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead
 Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range.
 Then, love me, Love! Look on me . . . breathe on me!
 As brighter ladies do not count it strange
 For love to give up acres and degree,
 I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
 My near, sweet view of heaven, for earth with thee!"

"How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?
 A hope, to sing by gladly . . . or a fine
 Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?
 A shade, in which to sing? . . . of palm, or pine?
 A grave on which to rest from singing? . . . Choose."

These passages, which we would gladly multiply, suggest the remark, that, besides the "Sonnets from the Portuguese," some of the minor poems of Mrs. Browning are the purest gems of her genius. Among these we will mention but two, — "Inclusions" and "Insufficiency," — forbearing quotation. The heroic tenderness of a woman's heart never found deeper expression than these little fragments afford.

The "Sonnets from the Portuguese" embody about all that the poet has left on record of the birth of her love for her husband. It is enough to say that those who looked for something in them proportioned to their writer's greatness of heart are more than satisfied. A romantic but incorrect account of the first acquaintance of Miss Barrett with Robert Browning has found its way into Appleton's Encyclopædia, and thence into many of the notices which have been written of her. It is stated that Browning, calling to thank her for a compliment to himself, and being entirely a stranger, was shown by chance into her sick-chamber, and came out her lover. We have the authority of a member of the family for saying that no such thing ever happened. At the time that Mr. Browning's attention was drawn to the allusion to his "Pomegranates" in "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," — with the fine fancy

of which he was so justly pleased,—Elizabeth Barrett was indeed an invalid, but at her father's house, surrounded by every comfort that love could devise, and in circumstances under which nothing like an intrusion into her chamber could by any possibility have occurred. The poet made an acknowledgment of the compliment paid him, in a note,—not, indeed, immediately, but somewhat tardily,—and was subsequently admitted to an interview. Their marriage took place two years afterward. The newspaper accounts of her death are more accurate, and, although meagre in thrilling details, are suggestive of that oneness of heart and life to which the happy two were appointed, and prophetic of the more perfect unity which awaits them in heaven. Never were man and woman more clearly ordained for each other than Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett. They were imperfect apart; together, they were rounded into one.

We may as well here correct the widely prevailing impression that Miss Barrett was obliged to struggle with poverty. On the contrary, Mr. Barrett was in good circumstances, and his daughter had no want unsupplied. This fact, far from detracting from her fame, should add to its lustre. There is, indeed, a certain merit in becoming great or learned in spite of the disabilities of poverty. But the disabilities of wealth are greater, and less frequently surmounted. It is truly a wonder that Elizabeth Barrett should have accomplished her noble work under the double burden of physical infirmity and pecuniary opulence.

It may be asked, Of what use is this criticism of the life and work of one of the noblest of women? Men need no proof that woman's sphere is emotional, impulsive, and domestic; and, thank God, the women that most brighten life need it still less. There are some, indeed, who are like wandering stars, and it would be hopeless to attempt defining an orbit for them. If a woman thinks she can reason, she can never be convicted, so that no demonstration can avail with this class. Let them go. We have not written for them, for we could not help them if we would. Doubtless they must fume their little hour ungracefully away. But God has not left the sexes mutually helpless. Even as men can some-

times *feel* what a woman's tenderness is, so woman can oftener *understand* what a man's reasons are. And hereby it is evident that we do not degrade or underrate woman, when we say that she is not, distinctively, a reasoning, but an impulsive being. For what is our reason, if it is not illuminated by her love? Moreover, her heart stands in the masculine mind; her beauty much more than adorns our strength. It is, then, the fullest acknowledgment that men can make of the equality of woman, when they submit even the highest exertations of their reason to her approval. They would be barren without her. Love is not inferior to wisdom, but is at least co-ordinate with it. Impulse is not less than reason, but rather the intuition to which its long and labored processes are an indirect and weary road.

" And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,
Sit, side by side, full-summed in all their powers."

ART. IV. — *Montrose, and other Biographical Sketches*. Boston: Soule and Williams. 1861. 12mo. pp. 400.

THIS little work contains four sketches: La Tour, Brummell, Johnson, and Montrose. The last named fills more than two thirds of the whole volume. The subject of it is the celebrated James Graham, Marquis of Montrose; and it is of him that we purpose to write in this article.

But first let us frankly bear testimony to the author's candid and impartial manner of estimating character, as well as to his ready sympathy with all that is truly generous, brave, and noble, and his undisguised scorn of all that is base, tortuous, and underhand in the conduct of the leading men of both parties. Far from being carried away into indiscriminate condemnation of the partisans of royalty, he justly makes allowances for the influence exerted over their actions by the circumstances of birth, habit, and education, — knowing well how to distinguish between self-sacrificing, devoted loy-